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December 05, 2014

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New Grants Improve Educational Opportunities for Wisconsin Child Care Providers

(MADISON) — Improving the quality of early childhood education just got easier for child care providers in Wisconsin. Recently the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) announced the award of Educational Opportunities Grants to eight Wisconsin institutes of higher education that will begin offering early childhood education courses in January of 2015. This program is based upon a successful pilot program at the Milwaukee Area Technical College (M.A.T.C.) in 2013, and the courses are designed to increase the quality of child care centers statewide.

The Educational Opportunities Grant is an initiative funded by Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC) to provide access to credit-based instruction at no cost to the participant for eligible 2 Star and 3 Star-rated child care providers across the state of Wisconsin. They will receive instruction through courses offered in the evenings and weekends in convenient locations within their community, provided in-person and online.

The grant requires that the schools offer courses that will help providers complete four Registry Credentials: Infant and Toddler Development, Preschool, Family Child Care, and After School and Youth Development. Information on the courses required to complete credentials can be found at <https://www.the-registry.org/Credentials/Overview.aspx>.

The eight institutes of higher education issued grant contracts beginning in 2015 are: Mid-State Technical College, Milwaukee Area Technical College, Moraine Park Technical College, North Central Technical College, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Waukesha County Technical College, and Western Technical College.

DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson noted that based upon the favorable early results from the M.A.T.C. pilot, the program would be expanded into a three-year initiative. "Expanding on a very

successful pilot program demonstrates positive efforts toward transforming early childhood education and developing the skills of our child care providers,” said Anderson.

The Education Opportunities Grants are part of the overall funding received through the Race to the Top-ELC (RTTT-ELC) grant. Wisconsin was selected to receive \$34 million in federal grant funding for a multi-department initiative run by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and the Department of Health Services, which focuses on improving educational outcomes for children between birth and kindergarten. The four-year grant runs from January 2013 through December 2016.

Read more at: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/rttt>.

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